
Foundational Practices

Over the years, through the accreditation program of the American Camp Association, many of the standards addressed in the ACA's efforts in this regard have been accepted as common practice by camp leaders and the public. In the process, they have become an important part of the body of knowledge applied by seasoned camp professionals. As former standards become generally accepted practice in the industry or are regulated by other bodies, they are acknowledged as FOUNDATIONAL PRACTICES and moved to this educational resource for self-assessment.

These directives are referred to as "foundational practices," because they are important to the delivery of a positive camp experience. They are a critical source of accumulated knowledge for new camps and new directors, and serve as a viable means of identifying the numerous individual considerations that must be addressed to develop a quality camp operation and program. They are valuable reminders to experienced directors of those matters that must be continually managed in the camp setting. They also serve as guidelines for parents, educators, youth development professionals, businesses serving camps, and governmental bodies, regarding norms in the industry related to the delivery of a positive camp experience.

In addition to the body of knowledge that has emerged from the camp industry itself, new guidelines are offered from the development of new products, research regarding safety, and specialists in areas related to camp activities. Many of these guidelines provide useful information to camp professionals for specific ways of enhancing their campsite and program. Guidelines from public sources or other industries applicable to camps in a specific way are included in the foundational practices in this section.

The 33 foundational practices, organized according to the sections of the standards, that should be addressed by directors and staff in their camp setting are listed in the subsequent pages of this section. They are scored as one standard under Operational Management, indicating that the camp has reviewed and responded as applicable to each item.

**Site and Food Service
Foundational
Practices**

- ☐ Appropriate insect/weed control methods are in effect, and only approved pesticides or herbicides are utilized on the property as identified by state/local codes.
- ☐ Erosion control methods are in practice, where applicable.
- ☐ The site is free from observable evidence of a sewage-disposal problem.
- ☐ Laundry facilities are available on-site or nearby for campers and staff in long-term camps and for campers with special needs.
- ☐ Adequate shelter for all campers and staff is provided during inclement weather.
- ☐ Permanent, enclosed dining facilities provide protection from problem insects.
- ☐ The site provides separate facilities to provide privacy and freedom from campers for staff during their time off.
- ☐ Administrators using a nonowned site have a written agreement with the site owner specifying responsibility for the use of the site, facilities, equipment, and services.
- ☐ Menus have been planned and/or approved by a nutritionist, dietician, or other person qualified to evaluate the level of nutrition and balance of the meals served.
- ☐ Food-service staff wear appropriate hair covers as required by state/local regulations, and wear clean, neat, practical clothing.
- ☐ Sleeping, dining, toilet, bathing, and program facilities are available to persons with disabilities.
- ☐ The camp provides toilets that meet the standards of regulatory bodies, applicable building codes, and provide for comfortable use of the camp.
- ☐ Hand-washing facilities are located adjacent to toilets and meet the standards of regulatory bodies, applicable building codes, and provide for comfortable use of the camp.

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- ☐ Toilet facilities in the main area and living areas provide privacy for occupants.
 - ☐ Pit and chemical toilets are screened or vented and equipped with toilet lids and self-closing doors.
 - ☐ The camp provides a minimum of one showerhead or bathtub for each 15 persons on-site for all resident camps and short-term resident programs.
 - ☐ For any playground area and apparatus, the camp has constructed the activity area according to accepted guidelines for safety, including an appropriate surface to cushion falls within the safety zone under and around the playground equipment.
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- ☐ Procedures are in practice regarding the use and release of any and all personal information related to campers and staff.
 - ☐ Budgeting, bookkeeping, and audit procedures consistent with good accounting practices are utilized annually.
 - ☐ Inventories of all facilities and equipment are reviewed and revised at least annually.
 - ☐ Arrangements for legal counsel have been made, and such counsel is available as problems arise.
 - ☐ The camp has written strategic-planning materials that assess current conditions and identify future needs for both the program and the operation.
 - ☐ The risk-management plan for the camp includes identifying, analyzing, and developing control techniques related to financial resources.
 - ☐ Policies are in place regarding participants bringing their personal items to camp.

**Operational
Management
Foundational
Practices**

Human Resources
Foundational
Practices

- ☐ The pre-camp training for camp program staff is of sufficient length to adequately prepare staff for their roles in programming and supervision.

Program Design and
Activities
Foundational
Practices

- ☐ Contracts have been signed with all providers of program services such as aquatics, adventure/challenge, horseback riding, and tripping that specify responsibility for meeting the intent of appropriate ACA standards.
- ☐ The program is designed to provide balance in the campers' activities.
- ☐ Campers participate in program planning in a variety of in-camp and off-season ways.
- ☐ The camp provides deliberately planned program activities designed to foster understanding of individual differences and group cooperation.
- ☐ Campers are free to practice their religious customs and to discuss spiritual matters in a manner that does not offend the rights and beliefs of others.

Program—Horseback
Riding
Foundational
Practices

- ☐ The camp has a policy limiting the maximum workday for a horse.

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- ❑ The camp pays appropriate fees and secures permits to access wilderness areas and parks.
 - ❑ Water bottles carried on trips are clearly distinguishable by shape, color, size, style, or marking from bottles containing liquids not fit for human consumption.

**Program—Trip and
Travel**
**Foundational
Practices**
